

# The Town Crier-Milestone 3

Connecting to the Classic City

Prototype Description and Usability Specification

Group 10

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*CSCI 4800 - Fall 2014*

## Preliminary Usability Specifications

From data gathered, 49 out of 60 that responded regularly participated in some sort of community outing (i.e. events, restaurants, music) every week. As such, our interface should make it easy to not only find certain events or restaurants, but also make accessing that information consistent. Users should be able to open the mobile application and know exactly where to go to find the information they are looking for. To obtain the quantitative information concerning how quickly users are able to find their information, a set of users will be asked to complete several tasks. Tasks may include finding a restaurant page, seeing what a friend has recently done, or leaving a comment about a certain venue.

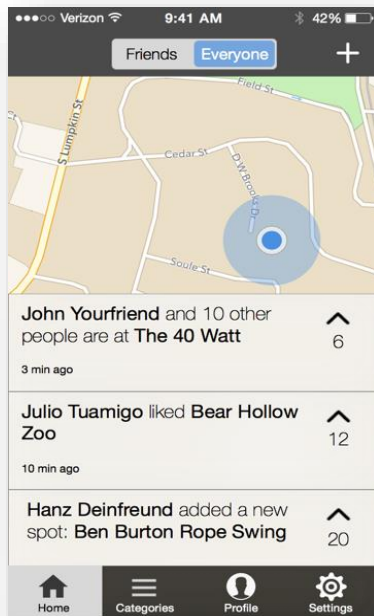
From these tests, we plan to gather quantitative data concerning the number of pages accessed while looking for these restaurants. We hope to limit the number of pages accessed when trying to do a quick search for a restaurant, but we also do not want to cram mountains of information on one page when a user is doing an extended search. In addition, the application should be usable as soon as the user opens it. The number of pages a user must access before actually being able to do a search or finding out about event information will be recorded - this will help us to see how quickly a user is able to start using the application. While keeping track of the number of pages a user has accessed, the duration a user stays on that page will also be recorded. Lastly, the total amount of time a user dedicates to completing a specific task (i.e. finding out what a friend has done, finding a new venue to visit) will be recorded as well.

In addition, 43% of those that responded to a survey reported that social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) is their main outlet for event information. As such, the mobile application being developed should function similarly to Facebook or Twitter - in the sense that the user can see what events friends have visited or what events are being held in the area. This qualitative information will be gathered by conversing with the user while they interact with the application. Questions concerning the format of the application interface will include, "How similar is this to Facebook?", "Does having a profile make it easier to see what your friends are doing", "Is it more convenient to find out about events through information given by your friends?". The mobile application has social media interaction through Facebook in mind. As such, the qualitative data we wish to gather will help us to see if bringing this experience to the Town Crier mobile application will benefit a user's experience.

More qualitative data that we plan to gather concerns how the mobile application handles user-gathered and user-distributed information. 65% of those that responded to our survey reported that their main method of learning about restaurants is by "word of mouth." As such, the mobile application aims to take advantage of this by allowing users to generate event and restaurant information via the "Point of interest" feature. The "points of interest" may be a restaurant, event, or attraction that a user enjoyed and wants to advertise. To see if this method of information-distribution is as effective as its dialog-based counterpart, we plan to pose several questions to a set of users: Do these user generated "points of interest" do a better job of convincing you to go to a restaurant than an advertisement would? If you enjoyed your experience at restaurant A or event B, would you make a "point of interest" to let other people know? How easy is it to make a point of interest and do you see yourself making one regularly? Information gathered from this user test will allow us to either improve the "word of mouth" aspect of the app or remove it entirely.

## Prototype Description

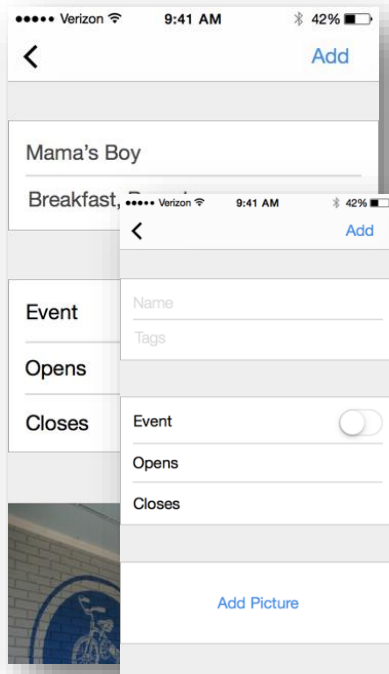
The Town Crier is a mobile application for a smart phone. In designing this application, we tried to keep things as simple as possible. To forgo yet another login and password to remember, we chose to use social media to handle that job. You will just pick which social media site, such as Facebook, to use as your login.



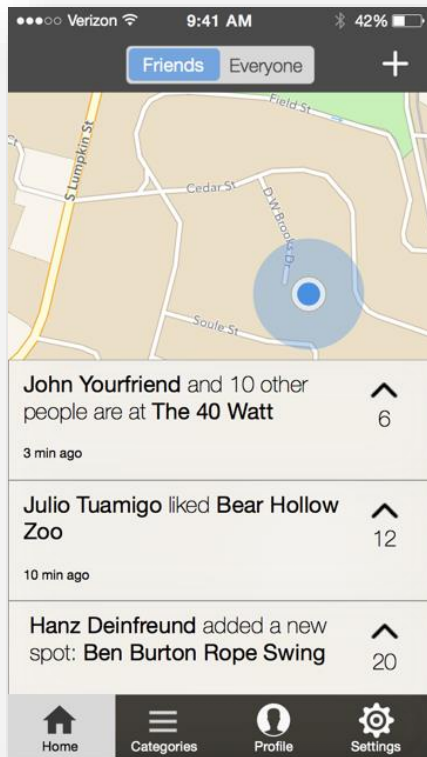
When users open the app they arrive at the home screen.

The home screen will display a map of your current location. It will also give a feed of current activities going on. It will show the current location of friends if they are in the area, new reviews posted about locations or events, or new venues added.

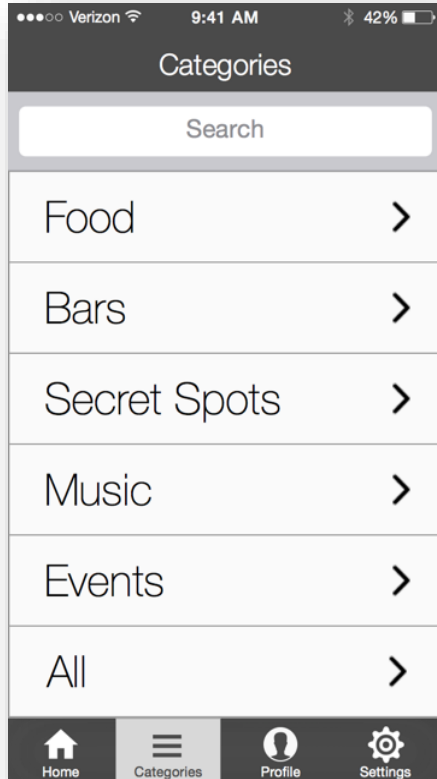
The main page has two options – display all users and events within the area or restrict information to friends from the user’s social media outlet (i.e. Facebook, Twitter). If the user elects to use the application without an account, the “Friends” option will be unavailable.



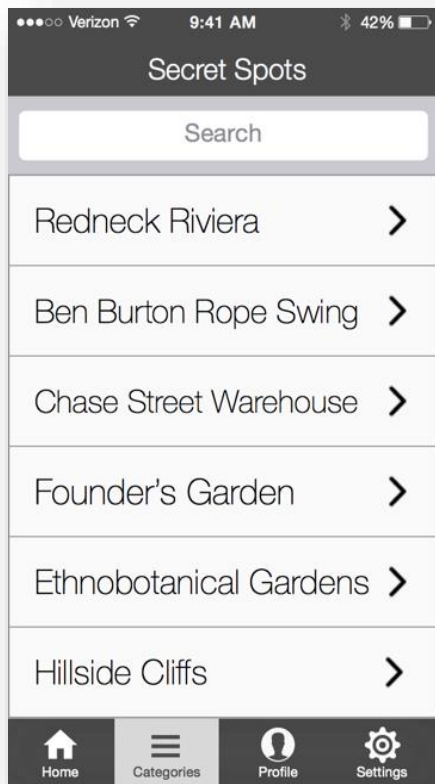
From the main page, users can press the ‘+’ button in the top right corner to access the “Point of Interest” page. This page creates a point on the map for other users to see. Once the point is made, other users can access the page and view other user’s comments, venue pictures, and venue information.



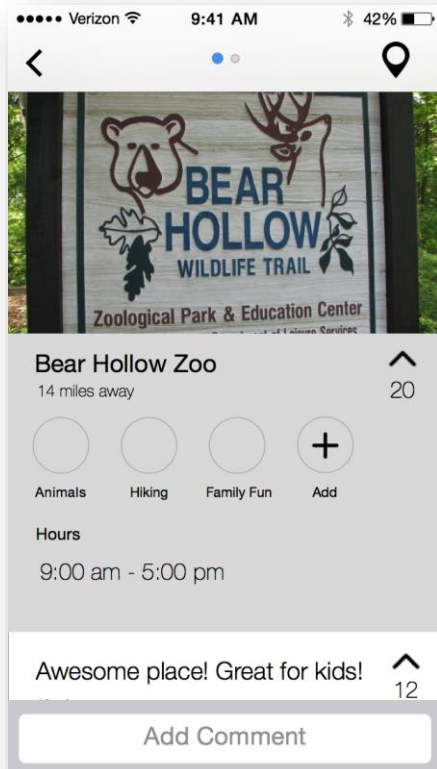
Pressing the “Categories” button on the bottom of any screen will access the categories shown in the figure below.



When a category is selected it will take you to a page that displays all the current venues for that category.

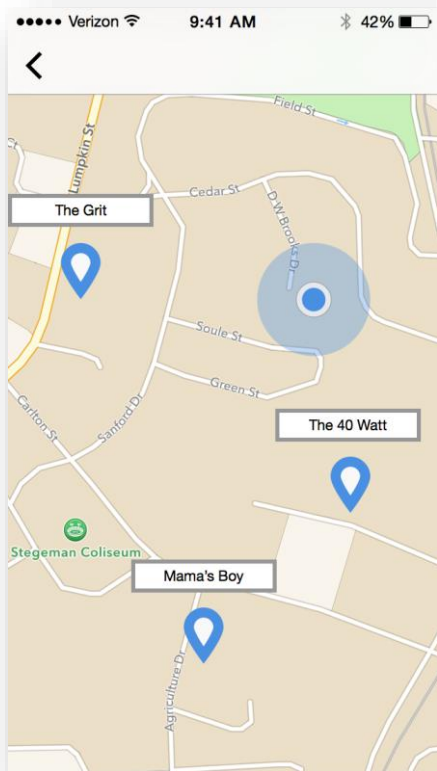


The user then can scroll through the venues and tap one to see more information. When a venue is selected, the application will display that venue's information page.

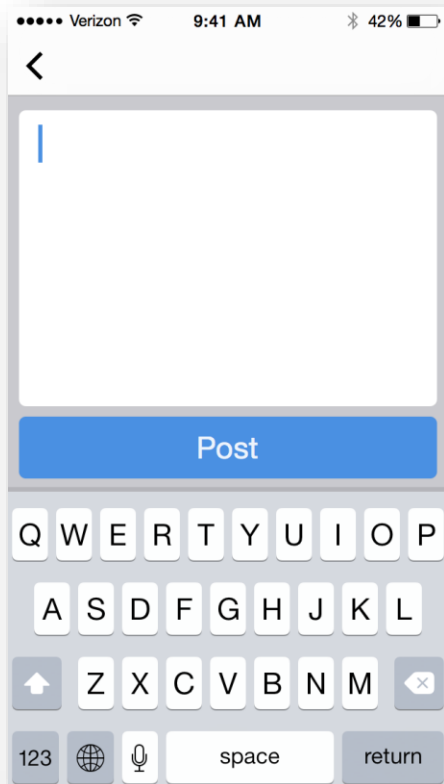


The information page will display a picture of the venue and some of the most recent reviews. The page will also list its current tags. By clicking a tag, such as "Hiking", the user will be shown a list of every attraction that is also tagged similarly. This will allow the user to access other attractions that are in the original category selected. This is a way of further filtering the venues by the tags created by people that have attended that venue. There is also an "add" option to add another tag to the attraction. The users can also up-vote the venue. The number of up-votes is displayed to the right of the venue's name.

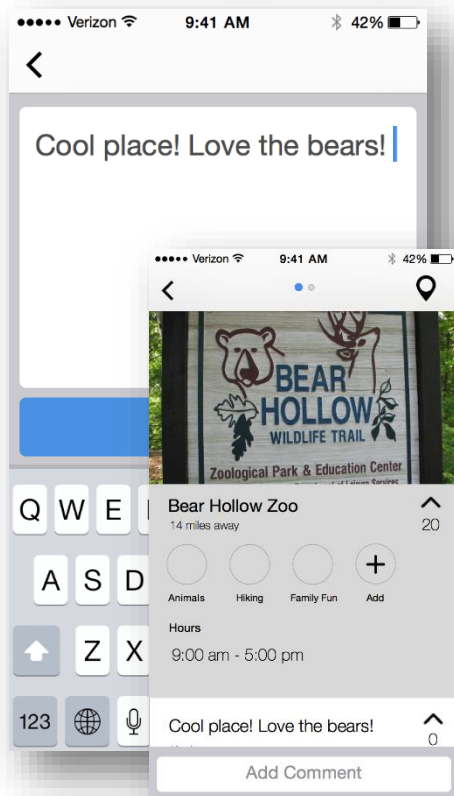
The hours of operation are also listed. The user can then swipe the screen to access more pictures and other information about the site.



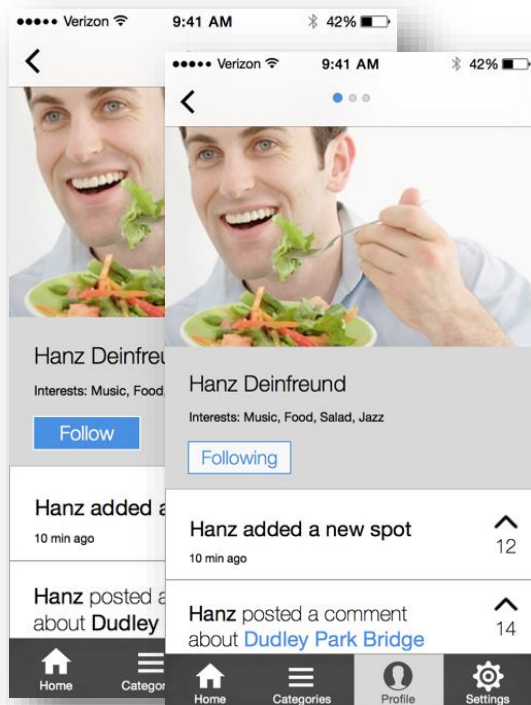
The 'pin' icon in the top right of the screen will lead the user to a map of where the restaurant, event, or attraction is located. The mapping feature will also be present where the address is listed. The information page can also be accessed by pushing the name of the attraction on any page it is seen.



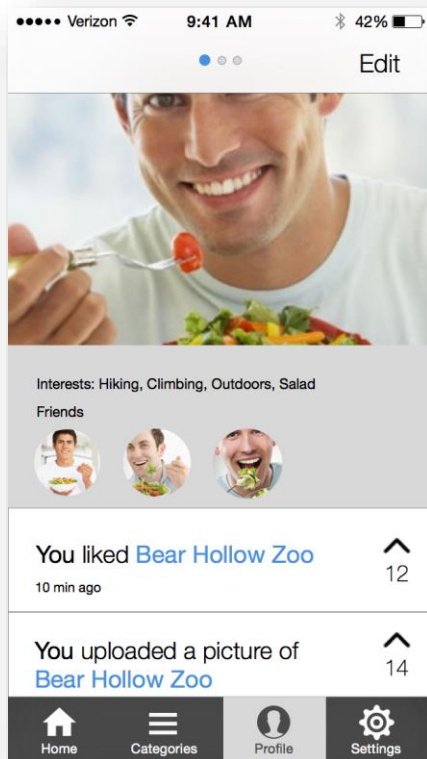
The user can also leave a comment about their experience at an attraction by selecting the "Add Comment" button at the bottom of the information page. This will bring up a text box and keyboard.



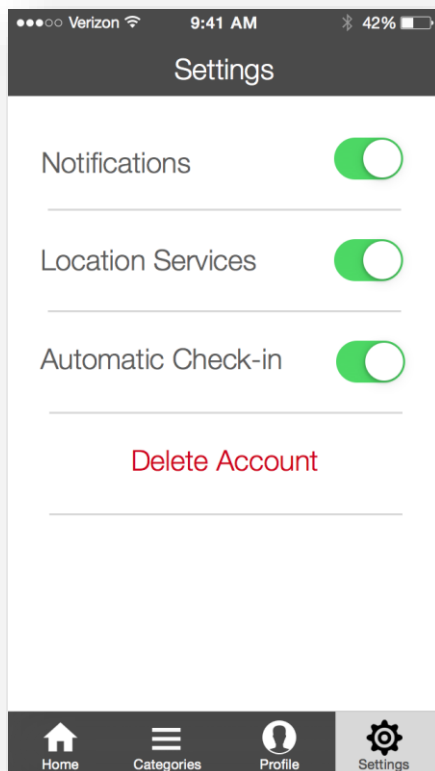
The user simply types the comment and select “Post”. The comment is posted at the top of that venue’s comment list.



When you click on a person’s name anywhere in the application, that person’s profile page will be displayed. Profile pages display any comment or review that that person has submitted. It will also give a list of their interests. Click the “Follow” button to begin following that person. Click again to stop following.



In the bottom menu bar, you may select the “Profile” button on the bottom of the screen. This will bring up your profile screen. Here you will see your current profile picture, what interests you have listed, venues you have added, and any comments or reviews you have written. If you select the edit button you can change your interests and your picture. This profile page will just be a place for you to set what other users will see in the application. The login and other profile aspects, such as name and age, will be provided by whichever social media site (Facebook, Twitter) you chose to be your login.



The user can select the “Settings” button at the bottom of the screen in order to go to the settings page. You can select if you want to be notified when new venues, comments, or tags are added. The settings page is also where you set some privacy settings. The user can toggle whether or not their current location will be tracked. Automatic check-in can also be toggled to update where you have been automatically.



## Implementation Challenges

While developing the functional prototype, there were several obstacles and issues that the group came across:

- “Scheduling” posed more of a distraction to our main goal, proved difficult to implement, therefore decided to scrap the idea in favor of the features implemented in this current prototype.
- Keeping the application as social as possible - focusing on distributing information in a very “word-of-mouth” like fashion was somewhat difficult to think of. Trying to virtualize a person-to-person interaction was something none of us have ever attempted. After much thought, we felt that focusing the application on user-generated content would best fit our goal.
- Several other aspects, such as key-fob app integration and the viewfinder, were ultimately scrapped because they simply distracted from the mobile application’s main goal - that is distributing restaurant and event information in a very peer-to-peer and interactive way.
- Unable to do integration with social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. The application can be used without a profile - for this current prototype, the social media integration is implied though not fully accessible.

## Justification

50% of users interviewed reported that a mobile application would be the most desired avenue of event and restaurant information in the Athens area. The second most popular method of information distribution was via a website, much like Yelp or Urbanspoon, which was selected by 35% of those that responded. Ultimately, there were two major factors that influenced the decision to favor a mobile application over a desktop-based application. First, a mobile application is not restricted to one location which allows the user to access information easily and conveniently. This can allow for features that use location services, such as finding venues close to one’s current location. Second, our surveyed population is an avid user of smartphones. According to the PEW Research Center, 83% of users aged 18-29 are smartphone owners. 74% of users between the age of 30 and 49 are also smartphone owners.

In addition to our mobile application design, we proposed the idea of social media integration with sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The user can simply login with their Facebook or Twitter information and have their Town Crier Profile setup with information retrieved from their social media page. If the user does not want to link their Facebook or Twitter page, they may also elect to make a separate Town Crier profile. It should be noted that the user is not required to create a profile to use the application - the application can still provide basic functionality without a profile, such as reading user comments and finding venue information. Personalized information, such as the activities of friends, posting a comment, creating points of interests, will be restricted to the users who have opted to create a profile through social media or the application itself. This integration helps to users to easily begin to use this application because many already use social media to discover events.

The last point highlighted by interviewed users was their heavy reliance on “word of mouth” communication to learn about restaurants and events in the area. 65% of those that responded reported that this was their method of gathering information. With such a high volume of responses for

one method, we felt that this was something that we needed to integrate into this system. In order to give Town Crier a word of mouth feel, users can submit their secret spots around Athens that others might not know exist as well as endorse locations, venues, and restaurants and share these reviews with their friends or with everyone. This is done via the “Point of Interest” page where users can create or “advertise” locations that they themselves enjoyed. These points of interests can then be commented upon, up-voted, and even have pictures uploaded. There is a focus on user-generated content, with the aim of giving the application a virtual “word-of-mouth” effect.

## Reference

- PEW Research Center, (January 2014), *Mobile Technology Fact Sheet: Smartphone Owners 2014*, Retrieved October 2014, <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/>

## Resources

- Mobile Application Prototype developed with inVision, from <http://www.invisionapp.com/>